Minute No. 589
Report – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – October 15, 2020

Item No. 1 Amendment to the Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy – Trip Priority System

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and adopted the following:

1. That in accordance with Section 56(4) of the Procedure By-law No. 50/2007, an extension of time of 30 days be granted for the Executive Policy Committee to submit a recommendation on the matter.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Allard,

That the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee be adopted.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On October 20, 2020, the Executive Policy Committee submitted the following to Council:

1. That in accordance with Section 56(4) of the Procedure By-law No. 50/2007, an extension of time of 30 days be granted for the Executive Policy Committee to submit a recommendation on the matter.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

On September 21, 2020, the Executive Policy Committee laid the matter over to its meeting on October 20, 2020.

STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On September 16, 2020, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, with the following amendment:

- Add the following new Recommendation 2, and renumber the remaining accordingly:

  "2. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to provide the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works with a verbal report on updated data related to the Route Match system, including a corresponding presentation on the published agenda, at its May, 2021 meeting."

and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

On July 7, 2020, he Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works granted an extension of time of 30 days for the Winnipeg Public Service to bring forward a report to the Standing Committee with a review of the Winnipeg Transit Plus priority system.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On January 30, 2020, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and adopted the following:

1. That budget resources required to address the Ombudsman's recommendations numbered 4, 5, 6, 8, 11 and 19 as described in this report in the amounts of:

2020	2021	2022	2023
$938,149	$875,130	$836,868	$853,158

be referred to the 2020 Budget Review process including:

A. The addition of seven (7) permanent and one (1) temporary FTE's:

i. Three (3) C clerks to triage and respond to incoming emails, provide direct responses to all no-show incidents, provide a response back to all complaints received, and provide the additional support required to dispatch and provide coverage for all operational hours.

ii. One (1) A clerk to manually process all no-show charges and record incidents.

iii. Two (2) inspectors to investigate all complaints and detail the outcomes, deal with critical emergent issues during all hours of service and provide coverage for all operational hours.

iv. One (1) senior inspector to deal with escalated calls or incidents and track and assign all work to Inspectors.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

v. A temporary (12-18 months) system analyst to assist in the deployment of remaining system functionality, new system configuration, additional required training, and review of data integrity after go-live.

B. The addition of a flat-rate contract for accessible vehicles to increase service capacity to mitigate the level of "unables" during winter months.

2. That the Handi-Transit Policy (TR-002) be renamed the Winnipeg Transit Plus (formerly Handi-Transit) Policy, and that the following amendments be approved:

a. That the configuration of the appeal panel be revised to add and include an external voting member that is not involved in the eligibility decision-making process.

b. That "winter only" service start no later than December 15 and end on March 31 for registrants with "winter only" categorical eligibility, and that the Manager of Client Services be provided the authority to begin or extend winter service, if required, based on weather conditions and snow accumulations.

3. That the elimination of the existing 500-metre area limit in the Winnipeg Transit Plus policy, be referred to the 2020 Budget Review process.

4. That the Public Service bring forward a report to the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works in 180 days with a review of the Winnipeg Transit Plus priority system.

5. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Amendment to Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy – Trip Priority System

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
T. Platt	G. Ewankiw	B. D'Avignon, Acting Interim CFO	M. Ruta, Interim CAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amendments to the trip priority system within the Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy will align with upcoming accessibility legislation and current paratransit trip scheduling practices.

The Manitoba Ombudsman's Report, January 2019, identified the need to review the trip priority system as it is contrary to the City's statement to ensure equitable access to mobility and universal access to the transportation system.

The draft Transportation Standard of the Accessibility for Manitoban's Act states that no transit provider can have a policy that restricts or limits access to transit service. The existing trip priority policy prioritizes trip requests based on the purpose of a trip and restricts access to the service based on the stated purpose. If left unchanged, the current trip priority policy would be in contravention of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

In 2019, Winnipeg Transit Plus implemented a new scheduling system (RouteMatch) to improve the use of available vehicle resources and reduce the number of trips that are not provided due to limited resources; "unables". Minimal efficiencies have been realized because the trip priority policy limits the productivity and efficiency of the system.

Amendments to the Policy include:

- To assign rides based on the order in which the requests are received through the use of an automated scheduling process.
- Individuals to submit trip requests in advance within defined time periods.
- Callers will be immediately advised whether a trip can be accommodated or not based on available resources. Trips that cannot be accommodated will be placed on a wait list.
- Trips on the wait list will be scheduled as resources become available from the utilization of cancels and no shows.
- A notification will be sent to scheduled customers after the automated scheduling process has been completed each day.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy be amended as attached in *Appendix A*.

2. That the proper officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

At its meeting on January 30, 2020, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and requested that the Public Service bring forward a report to the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works in 180 days with a review of the Winnipeg Transit Plus priority system.

As the recommendations are changes to existing Council policies, changes or amendments require Council approval.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Eliminating the trip priority system in the Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy will have the most significant impact on requests for Priority 1 trips (work, medical which includes dialysis, post-secondary, and prescribed therapy) which are currently guaranteed.

Eliminating the trip priority will provide operational benefits to the efficiency of the service fiscally and by fulfilling more trip requests for our customers by effectively allocating the available resources which will reduce “unables” (trips unable to be assigned). By eliminating the trip priority system the program will use its existing algorithms to move and group trips in a way that accommodates the largest number of requests in the most efficient way creating the best route.

The cost of hiring a temporary Clerk C FTE to conduct system testing and implementation of the automated scheduling optimization process will be offset by another position vacancy within the Transit Department and as such there is no financial impact from the recommendations.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

The trip prioritization system for the use of Transit Plus service began in 1977 when City buses were not accessible to persons in wheelchairs and the pilot for an accessible service was approved. Due to funding constraints the service was rationed based on trip purpose and wheelchair use.

There are three levels of priorities;

1. Priority 1 trips include; work, medical, and post-secondary education, therapy and transportation to a terminal (airport/bus depot);

2. Priority 2 includes; trips for religious services, non-prescribed therapy, volunteer, self-help groups, business, grocery shopping, advance ticket events; and
3. Priority 3 trips include; grooming; visiting; recreation activity and all other.

The City has made a significant investment in the accessibility features for its conventional bus fleet to provide equitable treatment and reasonable accommodation to the city's citizens. As of 2017, Winnipeg Transit has a conventional fleet of fully accessible buses. The City is also expanding accessibility to key bus stops and stations.

A 2019 Manitoba Ombudsman's Report stated that the trip priority systems is contrary to the City's statement to ensure equitable access to mobility and universal access to the transportation system; "*the prioritization system restricts access to the paratransit system".* The trip priority system was reviewed in detail and stopped short of a recommendation in anticipation of the efficiency of using a new scheduling system.

The draft Transportation Standard of the Accessibility for Manitoban's Act states that no transportation provider can have a policy that restricts or limits access to transit service. To align with the proposed Transportation Standard of the Province's accessibility legislation, the trip priority system within the Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy would need to be eliminated. In the current draft form of the standard, the existing trip priority system would be in contravention of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

Winnipeg Transit implemented a new scheduling system in the winter of 2019; RouteMatch. However, the priority system continues to create inefficiencies due to the commitment to provide service to all priority one requests instead of grouping all trips to create the most efficient schedule. The Manitoba Ombudsman's January 2019 report recommended that Handi-Transit, *"… review the functionality and impact to ensure the new scheduling system reflects reasonably equivalent service to the fixed-route transit system.*

The prioritization of ride requests does not allow the software (RouteMatch) to "batch" trips as it was designed to do to optimize available resources. The software system is intended to accept all trip requests and schedule them as a batch to create the most efficient schedule to accommodate the greatest number of trips using an "automated scheduling optimization" process. This process schedules the maximum amount of rides to all available resources and creates the most efficient route based on the requested trips for the day. By eliminating the trip priority system the program will use its existing algorithms to move and group people in a way that accommodates the largest number of requests in the most efficient way. Once the required re-configuration and testing is completed the trip priority system can be eliminated.

Currently, the software is forced to match and schedule Priority 1 trips regardless of the route it creates. As an example even if there is a Priority 1 trip next door to a Priority 2 trip, the system is forced to schedule the Priority 1 trip with all of the others and if there is room come back for the Priority 2 trip. This process restrains the system, so that in high demand times only Priority 1 trips are being accommodated.

With the elimination of the trip priority system, Transit Plus will move to an automated scheduling optimization process. When individuals call to request a trip, they will be immediately advised whether a trip can be accommodated or not based on available resources. If all resources have been allocated for the requested day, then the trip will be placed on a

waiting list. Transit Plus will optimize all trips on the waiting list as resources become available from the utilization of cancels and no shows. A notification will be sent to scheduled registrants after the automated scheduling process has been completed each day. If a customer does not receive their requested trip, they are encouraged to contact Transit Plus where dispatch will conduct an additional search for their requested trip(s). Once the required re-configuration and testing is completed the trip priority system can be eliminated and scheduling can occur through the automated scheduling optimization process.

An additional temporary resource (Clerk C) will be required to assist with the testing and implementation of the automated scheduling optimization process. The cost of this resource will be offset by a temporary vacancy in the Transit Department.

During stakeholders sessions in January of 2020, the concept of the priority framework was met with polarization among users with some asking for the system to remain intact and others who noted the practice is discriminatory. The groups were almost evenly split between wanting to keep the priority trip system and eliminating it all together. However, even those who were in favour of the priority system recognized that there was opportunity for it to be used contrary to its intended purpose as Transit Plus does not make any determination of the validity of the purpose of the trip, but assigns a trip priority based on the policy and customer's noted trip purpose.

Eliminating the trip priority system will have the most significant impact on requests for Priority 1 trips (work, medical which includes dialysis, post-secondary, and prescribed therapy) which are currently guaranteed. In 2019, sixty-two percent (62%) of all trips provided were Priority 1 trips. While the new proposed option would not guarantee any trips, individuals would be advised when they call to request a trip whether it can be accommodated or they would be provided with the option of being placed on a waiting list. Based on this immediate response they would be able to plan accordingly.

Winnipeg Transit is the only jurisdiction across Canada that uses a trip prioritization. Other Canadian transit systems have adopted alternative scheduling methods (a first-come, first serve; family of services, on-demand). The current trip prioritization process limits access to transit service and as such can be perceived as a discriminatory process and may leave the City susceptible to Human Rights complaints.

The revised Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy is included as Appendix A.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement

Date: August 4, 2020

Project Name:

Amendment to the Winnipeg Transit Plus Policy - Trip Priority System

First Year of Program **2020**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Capital					
Capital Expenditures Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budgeted Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Funding Sources:					
Debt - Internal	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Debt - External	-	-	-	-	-
Grants (Enter Description Here)	-	-	-	-	-
Reserves, Equity, Surplus	-	-	-	-	-
Other - Enter Description Here	-	-	-	-	-
Total Funding	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -				
Total Additional Debt Required	$ -				
Current Expenditures/Revenues					
Direct Costs	$ 16,322	$ 10,881	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Incremental Revenue/Recovery	$ -	-	-	-	-
Net Cost/(Benefit)	$ 16,322	$ 10,881	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budget Amounts	$ 16,322	10,881	-	-	-
Net Budget Adjustment Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

Additional Comments: The direct costs reflect the addition of a temporary Clerk C to conduct system testing and process implementation over an estimated 5 month period. The costs will be offset by a vacant position within the Transit Department.

original signed by
Laurie Fisher, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance and Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

N/A

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

01-01b: Key Directions for the Entire City – Key directions for connecting and expanding our sustainable transportation and infrastructure network.

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

This report is in accordance with the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (WCAP) as per Direction 3.1 *Increase Use and Efficiency of Public Transit Systems* (page 37).

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Transit
Division: Client Services
Prepared by: Teresa Platt, Acting Manager of Client Services
Date: August 4, 2020

Attachments:
Appendix A - Amendment to Policy No. TR-002